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ABSTRACT

An outline of the organization of a local reading resource center, its scope, and its function are presented. Such a center is a combined project of the Office of Education, ERIC/CRIER, and the International Reading Association and is designed to supply teachers, students, laymen, school officials, and researchers with the latest information about reading. It can function as a Drop-In Center for one-stop information or as an Outreach Center or both. Suggested outlines for the organization and functions of the two basic types are given, and the overall purpose of any center is stated to be that of assisting in the implementation of the best instructional techniques and materials known to the profession. (NH)

DEVELOPMENT OF A READING RESOURCES CENTER

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- I. The Right to Read Objective of Commissioner Allen has as one phase the development of a nationwide network of reading resources centers with the primary purpose of providing "one-stop" information services to the reading profession.

As the Commissioner stated on November 5, 1969, "Through these centers we hope to accelerate the dissemination and use of an extensive body of knowledge about reading and the treatment of reading problems. The centers will make available the latest information, research findings, or materials on reading to teachers, interested laymen, school officials, board members, and researchers." The Commissioner further stated that the USOE will support the establishment of these centers.

Therefore, we have a charge. And the response of colleges and universities has been gratifying. Dozens of institutions have agreed to initiate resources centers and even provide the initial financial outlay for getting the operations underway.

This ambitious objective is sponsored jointly by the USOE, ERIC/CRIER and IRA. Substantial collections of materials, both in fiche form and hard copy have already been distributed to approximately 70 centers by ERIC/CRIER and IRA. Equipment, space and personnel are currently being funded by the host institutions.

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I. (Continued)

The basic network has been established across the country in institutions which have not only agreed to serve, but which in some instances have completed the early phases of becoming operational.

The network can now be envisioned as a system of dendrites, or nerve endings, which branch out from ERIC/CRIER at Indiana University, and which will ultimately be within easy contact range of all schools in the country.

All RRCs would have a common feature -- the corpus of materials and information collected and reproduced by ERIC/CRIER --- and a unique feature -- responding in their own ways to the peculiar requirements of their geographic areas: for example:

- Urban needs compared with suburban and rural needs
- Teachers needs compared to supervisors needs, etc.

The Resources Center should become the touchstone for the area it serves. Every school official and reading teacher should be aware that the center is the place to get almost any information regarding the teaching of reading. It should be the first, and in most cases, the only stop the requester would make in search of information or assistance.

In order to serve as a touchstone, the RRC must be prepared with materials, qualified personnel, a communications system, an organization for service and funding appropriate to the services offered.

II. The Local Resources Center -- Organization

First -- the basic decision to provide a center

Then -- the nitty-gritty

1. Separate center, attached to the library system, attached to the Ed. Materials Center, or attached to the Reading Center.
2. Scope of the program -- information center only or a program of broader services -- difficult decision.
3. Personnel -- librarian or professional reading person as director?
How large a staff? Volunteers? Yes.
4. Materials -- where are they obtained and how? ERIC/CRIER and IRA supply the basic materials. (See Prospectus)
5. Space -- where and how much?
6. Equipment -- what is required and what are the costs? Fiche reader and a printer are basic requirements, along with storage files and materials shelves.
7. Financing -- how much can the institution provide for materials, personnel, printing and mailing, travel, services, etc.

\$5,000 plus salaries would be ample for most centers for dissemination of information. Can get by with less.
8. Advisory Board? Yes -- to provide assistance, state and local contacts and visibility. 10-15 members from the profession, business community, state level, related professions, the media, etc.

III. Scope and Function

A center can be as large and diverse as the needs of the area and the financial resources dictate. Recommend a modest beginning with plans for expanding as demands and budget allow.

III. Scope and Function (Continued)

Regardless of size and services provided, a few basic requirements exist for each center.

1. A collection of materials and information readily available to the user.
2. At least one qualified professional reading person (with secretarial assistance) who can contact the field and respond to requests.
3. A regular communication medium -- printed word or personal contact -- to provide detailed information on the center and how to use it.
4. A dissemination system -- if materials aren't used they are worthless.

With these basic provisions, a center can become operational -- there are two major types likely to develop.

The Drop-In Center -- One-Stop Information

Organization

1. Establish the Library base ERIC/CRIER materials and IRA publications; add other reading materials as funds and space allow.
2. Select and orient the Center staff to ERIC/CRIER, the RRC Program and the type and uses of the materials.
3. Establish and meet with the Advisory Panel of the Center. Discuss the Center, its personnel and its functions.
Identify the functions of the Advisory Panel
 - to identify the users and their needs
 - to help establish policy for the Center
 - to assist in contacting users and disseminating information
4. Build the budget -- Identify sources of funds.

Functions of the One-Stop Center

1. Periodic bulletins of the uses, activities, materials and services of the center - within and outside the profession.
2. Responses to specific user requests - Drop-in and feedback.
3. Personal liaison with the field -- needs.
4. To develop information of general interest to the area
 - State organization for reading programs
 - Names of reading specialists at State, National, College and local levels
 - Lists of organizations and associations interested in reading, and their publications
 - Information about reading training programs in the state and region
 - Names of reading councils and their leadership
 - Regional calendar of events such as conferences, workshops and special programs
5. Periodic User Orientation Programs on campus -- films, graphics and demonstrations of the use of the Center.
6. One-shot conferences (drive-in) to discuss matters of mutual interest to local or regional groups
7. Evaluation of Effectiveness of the Center
 - Quantitative - number and types of requests and responses, and other services rendered.
 - Qualitative - the ability of the center to provide the service requested.
 - effectiveness of the staff and advisory board
 - adequacy of planning, budgeting, acquisition and dissemination
 - types of requests the Center could not handle

The Expanded or Outreach Center

Would perform all the functions of the one-stop center as described earlier.

In addition, would take a variety of services to the field.

Staff of the Center would need to be increased to provide programs such as:

- Consultative Assistance
- Program Analysis
- In-Service Workshops, Conferences, Seminars
- Liaison activities with civic groups, service clubs, business, industry, etc.
- Response to other specific requests for materials and professional resource persons who are needed on site.

Obviously requires a larger financial base.

Recommend that centers first organize themselves as one-stop dissemination programs, with expansion as needed and supported.

Overall purpose of any center should be to assist in the implementation of the best instructional techniques and materials known to the profession, rather than the development of long-range research programs.

MLCoulter/cw

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